

*Congressman, House Vote to Protect Journalists and Sources With Federal Shield Law*

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell today said that a federal shield law is a necessary to "strengthen our democracy and protect the Bill of Rights" as he and the House passed H.R. 985, the Free Flow of Information Act. The legislation passed by a voice vote.

"In order to strengthen our democracy and protect the Bill of Rights, we must ensure that journalists have the tools they need to hold our government accountable and expose public corruption," Mitchell said. "Journalists have long relied on confidential sources as a means of getting key information. If these sources believe they will be easily compromised, journalists simply can't do what our democracy demands of them."

The Free Flow of Information Act protects journalists from being legally compelled to identify their confidential sources except in circumstances involving national security or imminent physical harm. Thirty-four states, including Arizona, currently have shield law protections enacted.

Reporters using confidential sources have exposed serious issues such as the dilapidated conditions at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the Abu Ghraib prison scandal and the Watergate scandal.